

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 SSC-01 /075 W

-----261238Z 122964 /43

R 261100Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4547

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 0837

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PFOR, GY

SUBJECT: SIGNIFICANCE OF GOG CABINET CHANGES

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 0721, (B) GEORGETOWN 0811 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE CABINET CHANGES OF APRIL 2 DO NOT APPEAR TO SIGNAL SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN GOG POLICIES. OUR VIEW IS THAT THE CHANGES IN THEMSELVES PRIMARILY A POLITICAL GAMBIT BY PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS. BLACK RADICALS IN THE RULING PEOPLES NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) ARE REPORTEDLY SOMEWHAT DISGRUNTED THAT THEY DID NOT OBTAIN SIGNIFICANT PORTFOLIOS. THE OPPOSITION HAS ACCUSED THE GOG OF MOVING TO THE RIGHT AND OF COURTING THE US. WE DO NOT CONSIDER THE CHANGES TO SIGNAL A CLEAR INTENTION BY BURNHAM TO MOVE IN EITHER DIRECTION. ENTIRELY APART FROM THE CHANGES, A SHIFT TOWARD "CONSERVATISM" (IN GUYANA'S TERMS) REPORTEDLY IS TAKING PLACE IN THE ATTITUDES OF CABINET MINISTERS, BUT SIMILAR SHIFT HAS NOT YET BEEN

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EVIDENT IN THE PNC; HENCE, A GROWING GAP BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE CABINET REPORTEDLY IS DEVELOPING. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE APRIL 2 CABINET CHANGES WITH PEOPLE IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF GUYANESE SOCIETY AND ARE SUBMITTING THIS ANALYSIS AS A SUPPLEMENT TO REF A. IF ONE INCLUDES REGIONAL MINISTERS IN THE COUNT, FIVE

MINISTERS LEFT THE CABINET IN THE SHAKE-UP. SOME SIGNIFICANT REALIGNMENTS OF FUNCTIONS TOOK PLACE WITH THE MOST NOTABLE REALIGNMENT BEING THE CLUSTER OF THE LABOR, HEALTH, AND HOUSING FUNCTIONS--PREVIOUSLY IN THREE MINISTRIES--IN A MINISTRY OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HOUSING UNDER HAMILTON GREEN, IN EFFECT CREATING A SUPER-MINISTRY. THIS IS THE DEVELOPMENT THAT SOME OBSERVERS AND GOG OFFICIALS POINT TO AS SIGNIFYING A SHIFT TO THE RIGHT.

2. OFFICIALS OF OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF MOVING RIGHTWARD. THUS THE PPP NEWSPAPER "THE MIRROR" IN AN EDITORIAL SAID THE GOG HAD MOVED TO THE RIGHT AND TOLD ITS READERS, "TO KEEP IN MIND, WHEN EXAMINING THE PNC CABINET CHANGES, THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US GOVERNMENT." THE EDITORIAL THEN REVIEWED FONMIN WILLS' TRIP TO WASHINGTON TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS AND SEEK AID. IT THEN SPECULATED THAT THE "CABINET SHAKE-UP MAY HAVE BEEN DONE TO APPEASE THE AMERICANS."

3. ONE COULD ARGUE THAT GREEN'S INCREASED ROLE WAS BALANCED OFF BY HAVING A MARXIST VINCENT TEEKAH REPLACE CONSERVATIVE CECILENE BAIRD AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION; HOWEVER, FROM ALL REPORTS THE PURPOSE OF THE TEEKAH APPOINTMENT WAS TO PUT ANOTHER EAST INDIAN IN THE CABINET AND, CONCURRENTLY, SIGNAL TO OTHER PPP MEMBERS THAT THEY TOO MIGHT BE REWARDED IF THEY TRANSFERRED TO THE RULING PNC. GOG OFFICIALS HAVE INSISTED THAT BAIRD

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HAD SET LINES OF EDUCATION POLICY WHICH TEEKAH WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CHANGE. MOREOVER, WILLS HAS SAID THAT TURNCOAT TEEKAH (HE DEFECTED A YEAR AGO FROM THE PPP) WOULD BE WATCHED CLOSELY BY TRUSTED PNC OFFICIALS DIRECTLY BELOW HIM. DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS, BURNHAM, WILLS AND OTHER PNC OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING RACIAL DIVISIONS IN GUYANESE SOCIETY, AND TEEKAH'S APPOINTMENT WOULD FIT IN WITH THIS EFFORT.

4. FONMIN WILLS HAD TOLD ME BEFORE THE CABINET CHANGE HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD RECOMMENDED TO BURNHAM THAT THE JUSTICE MINISTRY BE TAKEN FROM HIM AND GIVEN TO ATTORNEY GENERAL MOHAMED SHAHABUDDEEN WHO IS AN EAST INDIAN. ACCORDING TO WILLS, BURNHAM OFFERED THE JOB TO SHAHABUDDEN BUT HE DID NOT ACCEPT.

5. BLACK LEFTISTS IN THE PNC REPORTEDLY ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE CHANGES BECAUSE NONE OF THEM WERE GIVEN

SIGNIFICANT PORTFOLIOS. OF THESE, ROBERT CORBIN, THE FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE YOUNG SOCIALIST MOVEMENT AND PNC YOUTH SECRETARY, WAS MADE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PTOLEMY REID CAN CONTROL AND WORK WITH HIM. ELVIN MCDAVID, A LEFTIST WHOSE STAR APPEARED TO BE RISING, DID NOT GET THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE OR ALTERNATIVELY THE MINISTRY OF STATE JOB IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHICH HE HAD DESIRED. HE IS REPORTEDLY READY TO ACCEPT APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW--WHEN THE GOG HAS FUNDS TO OPEN AN EMBASSY (REF B).

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 0837

6. ANOTHER POLITICAL CONSIDERATION IS EVIDENT IN HAMILTON GREEN'S APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HOUSING. THESE FUNCTIONS ARE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE PROBLEM AREAS AND REQUIRE NOT ONLY DYNAMIC AND CAPABLE MANGEMENT, BUT ALSO MONEY. THE LABOR FUNCTION IS FRAUGHT WITH POLITICAL PITFALLS AT A TIME WHEN WORKERS ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH THE OPPOSITION-AFFILIATE AND THE PNC-AFFILIATE UNIONS ARE RESTIVE. IT IS KNOWN THAT GREEN AND HIS WIFE, SHIRLEY FIELD-RIDLEY, HAVE OUTSPOKENLY CRITICIZED ASPECTS OF GUYANA'S FOREIGN POLICY RECENTLY. AS GREEN IS KNOWN TO BE A CONTENDER FOR TOP LEADERSHIP SHOULD BURNHAM LEAVE THE SCENE, THE PM MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY GIVEN GREEN IN IMPOSSIBLE

CONBINATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES, EXPECTING THAT GREEN
WOULD BE PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED WITH FAILURES AND HIS
POLITICAL FUTURE RUINED THEREBY. FONMIN WILLS HAS
TOLD US THAT HE AND OTHERS IN THE CABINET ARE DETERMINED
THAT GREEN SHALL NOT PROGRESS HIGHER THAN HIS PRESENT
POSITION. WILLS ASSERTS THAT THE EAST INDIANS WOULD NOT
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ACCEPT GREEN AS PRIME MINISTER.

7. GREEN, DURING A CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE, SEEMED
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES, INDICATING
THAT HE WELCOMED SHOULDERING AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK.
WE ARE AWARE THAT HE HAS BEEN CULTIVATING CONTACTS AMONG
THE MIDDLE LEVEL AND JUNIOR OFFICERS OF THE GUYANA
DEFENCE FORCE (GDF) AS WELL AS MEMBERS OF THE BLACK
YOUTH GROUPS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE SEEN
INDICATIONS THAT GREEN'S IMAGE AMONG THE EAST INDIANS
MAY BE IMPROVING. ONE INDICATION IS THAT JAI HARAINE
SINGH, A CONSERVATIVE EAST INDIAN SPOKESMAN, TOLD THE
CHARGE HE CONSIDERS GREEN TO BE "FOUR TIMES MORE
INTELLIGENT AND CAPABLE THAN BURNHAM" AND THAT HE WAS
HIS FRIEND.

8. WILLS TOLD THE CHARGE THAT ATTITUDES OF THE CABINET
MEMBERS--NOT AS A RESULT OF RECENT CABINET
CHANGES--HAVE BEEN SHIFTING RIGHTWARD. HE SAID THAT
HUBERT JACK (A SOCIALIST), GAVIN KENNARD AND STEVE NARAIN
WERE BECOMING VOCAL IN ADVOCATING "CONSERVATIVE" POSITIONS.
FOR EXAMPLE, THEY WERE ECHOING GREEN IN QUESTIONING THE
WISDOM OF THE GOG'S NON-ALIGNED POLICY WHICH THEY FELT DOES
NOT HELP GUYANA ACQUIRE NEEDED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. WILLS
CLAIMED THAT THIS SHIFT IN CABINET OPINION WAS CONTRIBUTING
TO A GAP BETWEEN THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PNC
EXECUTIVE.

9. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW BURNHAM FEELS ABOUT THIS TREND
AND THE IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES THAT EXIST WITHIN
AND BETWEEN THE CABINET AND THE PNC. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS
SOME UNHAPPINESS IN THE PARTY OVER THE OUTCOME OF CABINET
CHANGES, THERE IS NO SIGN OF A CHALLENGE TO BURNHAM'S
HEGEMONY. WILLS HAS SAID THAT A PARTY REORGANIZATION WILL
BE CARRIED OUT BY MAY 26, THE ANNIVERSARY OF GUYANA'S
INDEPENDENCE.
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10. THE EMBASSY VIEWS THE RECENT CHANGES AS NOT SIGNIFYING
A CHANGE IN ANY DIRECTION BY THEMSELVES. THE IDEOLOGICAL
SIGNIFICANCE, IF ANY, WILL BE REVEALED WHEN IT BECOMES CLEAR
WHETHER HAMILTON GREEN SUCCEEDS OR FAILS AND WHETHER TEEKAH
MAKES A MARXIST IMPRINT ON THE EDUCATION MINISTRY. TEEKAH'S
APPOINTMENT, HOWEVER, IS A SIGNAL THAT THE BATTLE LINES ARE
BEING DRAWN BETWEEN THE RULING PNC AND THE PPP FOR NEXT
YEAR'S ELECTIONS AND THAT THE EFFORTS TO COURT JAGAN
ARE OVER -- AT LEAST UNTIL CONDITIONS CHANGE.
BLACKEN

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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